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Lusk Creek Canyon J. Schwegman

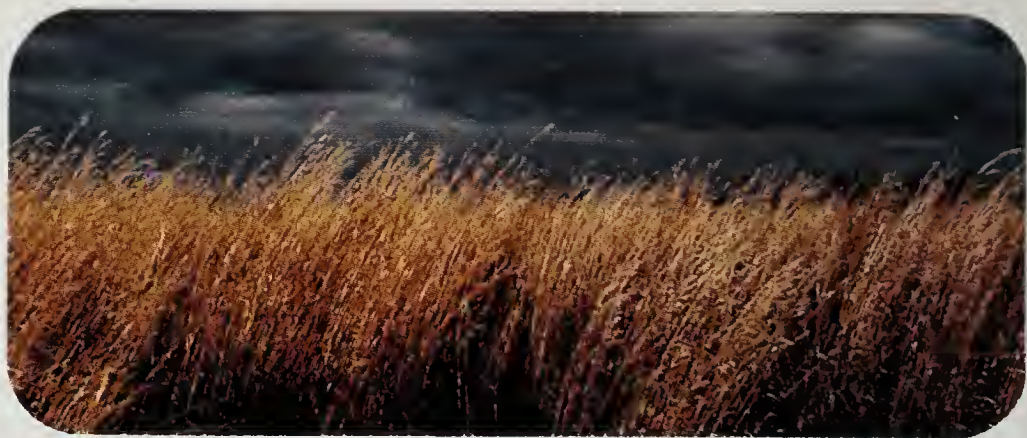
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



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PRESERVING  
ILLINOIS  
NATURAL  
HERITAGE  
The  
Illinois Nature  
Preserves  
System





*Big Blue Stem - Goose Lake Prairie*

## The Illinois Nature Preserves System

Hidden in the rugged hills of southern Illinois, Lusk Creek flows swiftly on its way to the Ohio River past high bluffs and through deep canyons eroded in rocks formed millions of years ago on the edge of a prehistoric sea. Forests of oak, maple and beech cover the ancient sandstone hills and hollows. Delicate ferns and rare wildflowers cling to the canyon walls, survivors from an age when ice sheets lay just a few miles to the north. Part of this scenic wilderness area is protected in Lusk Creek Canyon Nature Preserve.

Eighteen miles south of the Chicago Loop a low ridge of glacial sand and gravel marks the shoreline of a vast lake that covered the area 11,500 years ago. Colorful prairie grasses and open oak groves dominate the ridge, holding the sand against the forces of wind and rain. Rare prairie orchids, gentians and lilies hide in wet swales under tall cordgrass. Bear and buffalo have disappeared from the area, but deer, woodcock and bobolinks are still found in Sand Ridge Nature Preserve.

These are only two of over 60 nature preserves in Illinois that have been set aside to protect outstanding examples of our natural landscape. These remnants of the Illinois wilderness are rich in ecological diversity and provide havens for endangered species that might otherwise vanish from our state. Nature preserves have been established to protect our last flocks of the greater prairie chicken, a roosting area for the American bald eagle, habitat of the silverbell tree and the dusky salamander and the only native stand of the Kankakee mallow on earth.

Nature preserves range in size from a 1,861-acre cypress-tupelo swamp and bluff area in Heron Pond-Wildcat Bluff Nature Preserve in Johnson County to a two and one-half acre dry prairie knoll in Beach Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve in Ogle County. They are owned by state agencies, county forest preserve or conservation districts,



universities and private corporations. They are found in out-of-the-way corners of the state and in the shadow of great cities. Wherever they are found, nature preserves offer an interesting change from the monotonous landscapes that dominate our lives.

Illinois is in the forefront of the effort to preserve natural heritage. The Illinois nature preserves system was created to keep some undeveloped pieces of our highly developed state as ecological benchmarks for scientific research, education, and public enjoyment.

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and the Department of Conservation share the responsibility for establishing and overseeing the nature preserves system. They work closely with other governmental agencies and private groups like the Nature Conservancy and the Natural Land Institute to acquire natural areas and dedicate them as part of the system. Natural areas dedicated as nature preserves are given strict protection under state law. The staffs of the Commission and Department work with owners of nature preserves to be sure they are being used and managed properly.

All nature preserves are left undeveloped, except for trails and interpretive facilities, as sanctuaries for native plants and animals, and examples of our natural heritage. Many nature preserves have educational programs and visitor facilities connected with them, while others remain completely wild.



J. Schwegman



M. Bowles

*Prairie Chicken*



J. Schwegman

*Two-lined Salamander - Lusk Creek*

*Grass Pink-Sand Ridge*



J. Schwegman

*Volo Bog*

## The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory

Illinois has a rich heritage of plants, animals and natural features as a result of its geologic history and its location at the meeting place of the tallgrass prairie, the eastern hardwood forest, the southern swamps and the northern bogs. Some unpolluted streams, unplowed prairies and old growth forest still remain. Over 1,000 such sites were identified by an intensive, three-year inventory of natural areas completed in 1978. Undisturbed natural areas, habitats for endangered species of plants and animals, special geological and aquatic features and areas set aside for ecological research and study were located and classified by a team of ecologists from the University of Illinois Department of Landscape Architecture and the Natural Land Institute. The inventory was funded by the Department of Conservation with the help of a grant from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

The information gathered by the inventory provides a complete picture of the remaining natural areas in the state. This data will aid in developing a comprehensive nature preserves system for Illinois and will also enable planners and developers to avoid and protect significant natural areas.

The inventory revealed that some significant natural area types have already disappeared and that the remaining unprotected natural areas are being destroyed at an alarming rate. The effectiveness of our heritage preservation effort will depend upon how fast we proceed and how much public cooperation and assistance we receive.



# ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES

## PROTECTING OUR NATURAL HERITAGE



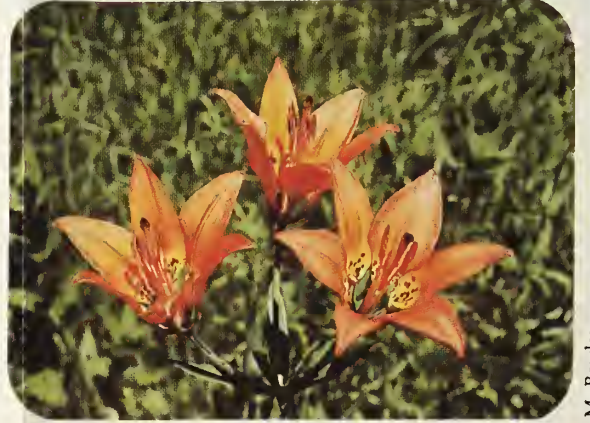
M. Bowles

Castle Rock



J. Schwegman

Grosbeak - Ozark Hills



M. Bowles

Prairie Lily - Illinois Beach



J. Schwegman

Plains Scorpion - Fults



R. Schanzle

Reavis



J. Schwegman

Cardinal Flower - Beall Woods



D. McFall

Chorus Frog - Kinnikinnick Creek



J. Schwegman

Crested Coralroot - Fults



M. Bowles

Illinois Beach



J. Schwegman

Prickly Pear Cactus - Sand Prairie - Scrub Oak



J. Schwegman

Fults



J. Schwegman

Lusk Creek Canyon

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION  
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
605 STRATTON BUILDING ■ SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706





M. Hutchison

Heron Pond - Wildcat Bluff

*Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question of whether a still higher "standard of living" is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech.*

*Aldo Leopold  
from the forward to  
Sand County Almanac*

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# Donation and Dedication of Preserves

Many valuable natural areas can be preserved through donations of land by private individuals or corporations. Gifts of land to public agencies or non-profit preservation organizations are tax deductible. In some cases, landowners who donate their land for preservation purposes can obtain significant financial advantages while also having the satisfaction of knowing the land will be preserved according to their wishes.

If a private landowner wishes to retain ownership, and still assure that the land will remain in a natural condition, conservation easements or dedication as a nature preserve may be considered. Both can protect the land from being used for purposes that would destroy its natural quality. Also, the value of the easement or dedication can be considered a charitable contribution for tax purposes.

Natural areas already in public ownership can be protected from misuse or damaging changes by dedicating them as part of the nature preserves system. Dedication gives an area the protection, recognition and permanence it deserves. Dedication as a nature preserve does not change the ownership or right to control access, though the owner commits to maintaining the land in its natural condition.

## Protection of Preserves

Simply acquiring or dedicating land as a nature preserve is not sufficient to protect it. A greater commitment is needed from every citizen of Illinois to help protect nature preserves from abuses such as picking of flowers, littering, disturbing wildlife and trampling vegetation. We are blessed with a diverse natural heritage and it is the responsibility of all of us to preserve it. Your cooperation and assistance is needed.



*For more information contact:*



Illinois Dept. of Conservation  
or

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission  
605 Stratton Building  
Springfield, Illinois 62706